

THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
THE 'PRABODHA-CANDRODAYA'  
OR  
'RISE OF THE MOON OF KNOWLEDGE'

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The drama is essentially allegorical in character and lacks the human interest of the plays of Kālidāsa or Bhavabhūti. Its main purpose is to expound in a dramatic form the Advaita school of the Vedānta system of Indian philosophy. Every character in the play, with the exception of the Sūtradhāra or stage-manager and his wife, and two or three attendants belonging to the party of the hero and that of his antagonist, who are merely brought in to accord with the conventions of classical Sanskrit drama, is intended to represent some abstract quality, either good or bad. The dramatist is purely concerned with impressing the mind of the reader with the essential doctrines of the Advaita school of philosophy. It is also to be noted that he has cleverly blended the doctrine of Viṣṇubhakti with this Vedānta doctrine of the Absolute. It is a combination of the Abstract and the concrete, as it were. The one depends upon an external object, though conceived in the mind, the resplendent form of viṣṇu with His hands and feet; and the other rests upon a purely abstract intelligence which leads to the realisation of self.

The essential elements of the Advaita doctrine as exhibited in the drama are as follows:

Īśvara or the supreme soul is the only entity which is permanent and indestructible and the universe with its variety is false. Its apparent existence is due to the influence of Māyā or Illusion which corresponds to the prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya system. This Māyā is the material cause (pariṇāma upādāna) of the universe. At the disappearance of Māyā, the world also disappears, just as a pot disappears when its material cause, the clay, is destroyed. The contact of the japākusuma or china-rose alone is required to make the white marble red. So also the presence of Māyā alone is required to affect Īśvara or pure consciousness. This Māyā is an entity which has no beginning. It creates the world through the mind by the mere will of Īśvara. Īśvara is still free from the contact of Māyā. He has no qualities, either good or bad, and has no shape of any kind. The essential nature of His Being is Knowledge and transcendental happiness. He shines with His own light and does not require any other light to illuminate Him. He is Svaprakāśa. Even such a transcendental and indestructible entity as Īśvara, who is the supreme Lord of the world, has been deluded by Māyā. Cf.—Veśavilāsinī iva

māyā asatopi bhāvān upadarśayanti puruṣaṃ vañcayati. Īśvara, though He is not susceptible to any kind of change by His very nature, is still made to assume false appearances through the evil effects of this Māyā. cf.—

Sphaṭikamaṇivad bhāsvān devaḥ, pragāḍham anāryayā  
Vikṛtim anayā nitaḥ Kām apy asaṅgatavikriyāḥ  
Na Khalu tadupaśleṣād asya vyapaiti rucir manāk  
Prabhavati tathāpy eṣa puṁso vidhātum adhīratām (I-26).

The mind, which is the offspring of Māyā or Illusion, has bound this non-dual and non-differenced consciousness, Īśvara, in the human bodies which are unnumbered, and has transferred its own qualities of doing (Kartṛtva), feeling (bhokṛtva) and others to this pure consciousness.

Cf.—Eko'pi bahudhā teṣu vicchidya iva niveśitaḥ  
Svaceṣṭitam atho tasmin nidadhāti maṇau iva (I-28)

In this bound state Īśvara undergoes the name of Jīvātman or the individual soul. Now Ahaṅkāra or egoism, which is one of the characteristics of the mind, envelops Him and He is made to feel, to suffer, to do and to enjoy. Cf.—tato'sau ahaṅkāreṇa cittasya jyeṣṭhaputreṇa naptrā pariṣvaktāḥ.

He sees many phantoms, being bound in this body by the mind. He imagines that he is born here and dreams of his father, mother, wife, children, lands, money, friends and the like. All these are no more than mere phantoms of the mind.

Cf.—tataś ca asau īśvaraḥ  
Jato'haṃ janako mama eṣa janani Kṣetraṃ Kaḷatraṃ Kulam  
Putrā mitram arātayo vasu balaṃ vidyā suhrd bāndhavāḥ  
Cittaspanditakalpanām anubhavaṃ vidvān avidyāmayīm  
nidrām etya vighūrṇito bahuvidhān svapnān imān paśyati (I-29)

These are not the properties of the soul, the non-dual and non-differenced consciousness, but the qualities of the mind. What appear to be the properties of Īśvara or Puruṣa or the soul really belong to the mind. It is the contact of the mind with Īśvara or puruṣa which makes us think that what really belongs to the mind belongs to Īśvara. Thus it is obvious that in the Advaita system there is no difference between the Supreme soul (Īśvara) and the individual soul (Jīva). They are one and the same. But the mind is different from this puruṣa. Now the emancipation for this bound Īśvara from His imprisonment in the body has to be achieved and it comes to Him the very moment He realises Himself. Cf.—

Baddhvā eko bahudhā vibhajya jagatām ādiḥ prabhuḥ śāśvataḥ  
Kṣiptvā yaiḥ puruṣaḥ pureṣu paramo mṛtyoḥ padam prāpitaḥ

teṣāṃ brahmabhidāṃ vidhāya vidhivat prānāntikāṃ vidyayā  
prāyaścittam idaṃ mayā punar asau brahmaikatāṃ niyate (I-31)

The special feature of the Advaita system as opposed to the rival Indian philosophical schools of Dvaita and viśiṣṭādvaita is that it wins salvation for the soul, even while man is living, not necessarily after the destruction of the body in which He is bound. The type of salvation here is Jīvanmukti. The world which is the result of Illusion through the mind disappears when the soul achieves self-realisation. Self-realisation is possible for the soul only when the mind applies itself with discrimination to the understanding of the true nature of the soul by means of the sacred upanishadic lore. But there is a great obstacle to the realisation of this end. The mind can never acquire discrimination unless it frees itself from the various activities of the world in which it is hitherto absorbed; until the external objects of sense cease to affect the soul through it. The mind should first of all conquer the great evil, namely, Infatuation, which is fostered by love, anger, greed, vanity and other passions. This great evil of Infatuation is further supported by such heretical schools as materialism, Jainism, Buddhism and Somism.

In the first place, Cārvāka is the exponent of Materialism or rather Atheism. He says that there is no such entity as the soul with a separate existence from the body and that consciousness in the body is the result of a certain combination of the elements. Consciousness is only a result of chemical process to Cārvāka. Just as the chemical combination of oxygen and hydrogen gives rise to a new matter in the form of water, so also the chemical combination of the elements, earth, water, light and air in such a way as to manifest consciousness gives rise to the living body. Cf.—

Haṃho paśyata tattvato yadi punaś chinnād ito varṣmaṇo  
drṣṭaḥ kiṃ pariṇāmarūṣitaciter jīvaḥ pṛthak tair api (II-17).

This outright exclusion of the soul from the system of Cārvāka leads him to the conviction that there is no life after death, that salvation is extinction of the body and that, therefore, the only ends of human existence are 'artha' and Kāma'. Acquisition of money and gratification of sensual desires are the end and aim of such a life. There is no distinction of caste, no idea of morality and all is chaos. There is no distinction between the wife and wealth of one man and those of another. Cf.—

Tulyatve vapuṣāṃ mukhādyavayavair varṇakramaḥ Kīdrśo  
Yośa iyaṃ vasu vā parasya tad amuṃ bhedaṃ na vidmo vayam  
(II-18).

Perception is the only instrument of right cognition in the Cārvāka system. The injunctions of the vedas are all foolish since they aim at securing Heaven which is non-existent. Cf.—Sarvathā lokāyatam eva śāstram; yatra pratyakṣam eva pramāṇam, pṛthivyaptejovāyavas

lattvāni, arthakāmaū puruṣārthau, bhūtāny eva cetayante, na asti paralokaḥ, mṛtyur eva apavargaḥ, dhūrtapralāpas trayī.

Svargaḥ karṭṛkriyādravyavināśe yadi yajvanām  
tato dāvāgnidagdhānām phalaṃ syād bhūri bhūruhām (II-19).

(If Heaven be obtained through the officiating priest, sacrificial rites, and the destruction of the substances employed, why is not abundance of excellent fruit obtained from the ashes of a tree which has been burnt up by the fire of forest?)

'If the victims', says Cārvāka, 'slain in sacrifice ascend to heaven, why are not parents offered up in sacrifice by their children? If funeral oblations nourish the deceased, why is not the flame of an extinguished taper renovated by pouring on oil?' Cf.—

Mṛtānām api jantūnām śrāddhaṃ cet tṛptikāraṇam  
nirvāṇasya pradīpasya snehaḥ samvardhayet śikhām (II-20).

Secondly, the other three schools, Digambara Jainism, Buddhism and Somism or Soma Siddhānta are far better than this thoroughly atheistic creed of Cārvāka. They all accept the existence of the soul and recognise the necessity for its salvation in some form or other. According to Jainism, the soul is placed in the heart of the body, like a candle in the midst of a vessel or a house. It is imprisoned in the body to enjoy or to suffer according to its Karma. It can attain freedom from this bondage by observing the duties enjoined by Arhat or Jina, such as pulling the hair (Keśaluñcana), standing on burning stones (taptāśilādhirohaṇa) and the like. Though the soul is self-luminous (svaprakāśa), like that of the Advaitin, it cannot illuminate the world, since it is circumscribed by the body; even as the flame of a candle placed in a vessel cannot illuminate the objects outside the vessel. Thus its capacities are limited in comparison with those of the soul of the Advaitin. The nature of the soul should be understood by serving the Jain sages assiduously and one should not object to a Jain ascetic loving a woman. It should be noted here that, according to Jainism, the soul cannot understand the world, since it is circumscribed by the body and since there is no medium of understanding between the world and itself.

According to Buddhism, all objects of the senses are ephemeral and therefore unreal. Whatever we see, hear or feel is false. And the Buddhist conception of salvation consists in the total extinction of the current of thought. When the intellect has ceased to conceive any sensuous object and has broken the fetters of every kind of impression left on it by past actions, good or bad; when it attains to such state of passivity that the objects of senses received by it appear to lie outside it without producing any kind of impression upon it, then, the soul may be said to have attained its salvation. This is the Jīvanmukti of the Buddhist.



Cf.—Sākṣāt kṣaṇakṣayaṇa eva nirātmakāśca  
 Yatra arpitā bahir iva pratibhānti bhāvāḥ  
 Śā eva adhunā vigalītākḥilavāsanatvāt  
 dhīśantatiḥ spūratī nirviṣayoparāgā (III-8)

We here see some similarity between the Buddhist and the Advaitin. Both recognise the falsity of the material world. For the Advaitin, Jīvanmukti is the self-realisation of the soul; and the Buddhist also has his Jīvanmukti, though in a different way. It is sometimes remarked that the Advaitin is a Buddhist in disguise. But the Buddhist differs from the Advaitin in this respect that, in his system, the soul is not permanent. Like the Digambara Jain, he also has no objection to the Bhikṣu loving a woman. cf.—Kṣaṇikāḥ sarve saṃskārāḥ; na asty ātmā sthāyī; tasmād bhikṣuṣu dārān ākramatsu nā īrsitavyam. It is curious to note that the Buddhist monk believes that he has put on the yellow robe, not to save his own soul, for that would involve him in trouble since, according to his own theory, his existence is unreal the very next moment, but with the hope that somebody in his family would attain salvation in future by his penance now. Cf.—Asmatsantatipatitaḥ Kaś cid vijñānalakṣaṇaḥ samucchinnavāsano mokṣyate. It is also to be noted that both the Buddhist and the Jain recognise the vital importance of Ahimsā as against the cruel duty of the Kāpālīka, the follower of Somism or Somasiddhānta.

Somism is repulsive and disgusting in its conception of duty. The appearance of the Kāpālīka, its devotee, is awful. His ornament is a necklace of human bones and skulls; he lives in the cemetery, eats in a human skull, drinks wine and offers human sacrifices to his god Śiva.

Cf.—Narāsthimālākṛtacārubbhūṣaṇaḥ  
 Śmaśānavāsī nṛkapālabhojanaḥ (III-12)

He has magical powers and thereby he can bring down the gods, can stop the movements of the stars in the sky and, having filled the earth with water, can again drink it in a moment.

Cf.—Hariharasurajyeṣṭhaśreṣṭhān surān aham āhare  
 viyati vahatām nakṣatrāṇām ruṇadhmi gatīr api  
 sanaganagarīm ambhaḥpūrṇām vidhāya mahīm imām  
 Kalaya sakalam bhūyas toyam kṣaṇena pibāmi tat (III-14)

To him the world is not different from Īśvara, though it is mutually different, just as a gold bracelet and a gold ring are not different from gold, though they are different from one another. Cf.—

Jagan mitho bhinnam abhinnaṃ īśvarāt.

He is opposed to the Advaitin's conception of salvation which consists in a state of absolute stone-like passivity for the soul. He says that no form of happiness can ever be separated from sensual desire and that, therefore, one who attains salvation sports with one's wife, resembling

Pārvatī in form, himself assuming the form of Śiva. His is sārūpya-mukti.

Cf.—

Drṣṭam Kva api vinā na viṣayair ānandabodhojjhitā  
jīvasya sthitir eva muktir upalāvasthā katham prārthyate  
pārvatyāḥ pratirūpayā dayitayā sānandam ālingito  
muktaḥ Krīḍati candracūḍavapur ity ūce mṛdānīpatiḥ (III-16)

It should be noted here that Jainism and Buddhism differ slightly from each other in point of doctrine. They are kindred sects having a fundamental basis in common with each other. Somism differs very much from both these and the Advaita is antagonistic to all of these heretical sects.

All these heretical doctrines are likely to lead the mind away from the path of self-realisation and, therefore, they should be destroyed before one applies oneself to the study of the sacred lore (upanishad). Next, Love (Kāma) should be conquered by always contemplating the abhorrence of the body of a woman and by living in places where tranquillity reigns. Cf.—

Parīṇativirasatvaṃ dehabībhatsatām vā  
pratipadam anucintya unmulayiṣyāmi Kāmam (IV-11)  
pratyakṣāśuciputrikām striyam aho mohasya duṣṣeṣṭitam (IV-8)  
bāhyāntaḥ paripaśyatām tu nirayam nārī iti nāmnā Kṛtam (IV-9)

Cf. also

Vipulapulīnāḥ Kallolīnyo nirantaranirjharī  
masṛṇitāsīlāḥ śailāḥ sāndradrumā vanarājayaḥ  
yadi śamagiro vaiyāsikyo budhaiś ca samāgamah  
Kva piśitavasāmayyo nāryas tadā kva ca manmathaḥ (IV-12)

Patience (kṣamā) is the only quality by which anger (krodha) may be curbed.

Cf.—

Krodhāndhakāravikaṭabhrukūṭitaranga  
bhīmasya sāndhyakiraṇārūṇaghoradrṣṭeḥ  
niṣkampanirmalagabhīrapayodhidhīrā  
dhīrāḥ parasya parivādagiraḥ kṣamante (IV-15)

Again, contentment (santoṣaḥ) is the only means by which greed (lobhaḥ) has to be subdued. Cf.—

Mṛtyur nr̥tyati mūrdhni śasvād uragī ghorā jarārūpiṇī  
tvām eṣā grasate parigrahamayair gṛdhrair jagad grasate  
dhūtvā bodhajalair abodhabahulaṃ tal lobhajanyaṃ rajaḥ  
santoṣānr̥tasāgarāmbhasi punar magnaḥ sukhaṃ jīvati

Thus the mind is now free from all the mighty sources of Infatuation and from all the various activities of the world. It now applies

itself diligently to the study of the sacred upanishadic lore. When the soul understands the true nature of Himself through the mind, He sees that He is no other than the supreme Lord, the one non-dual and non-differenced consciousness. Now, the world which is the result of Illusion disappears for Him and there remains nothing but pure consciousness (śuddha-Brahman). This is the nature of Jīvanmukti to the Advaitin. Now, the puruṣa mixes with nobody, has nothing to ask any one and is free from fear, sorrow or any other passion. The place where he happens to be in the evening is his home and he takes the quarters at random in peace without any aim.

cf.—

Saṅgamna kena cid upetya Kam apy aprcchan  
gacchann atarkitaphalaṃ vidiśaṃ diśaṃ vā  
śānto vyapetabhayaśokakaṣāyamohaḥ  
sāyaṃgrho munir aham bhavitāsmi sadyaḥ (VI-31)

Here it should be observed that the various darśanas, such as the Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and others unite together in a common cause against the heretical doctrines of Cārvāka, Buddha and others, in order to support the vedas, though they are at variance with each other. The source of their teachings being the vedas, they have a common origin. Even while we see that the vedas themselves and their different parts seem to disagree with one another, we should not suppose that they lack unity. The disagreement we see between the several parts of the vedas is only apparent, not real. There is only one entity, the Supreme Being and it is marked by different names, such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva by the different parts of the vedas. Cf.—

tena vedaprasūtānām  
teṣām avāntaravirodhe' pi vedasaṃrakṣaṇāya  
nāstikapakṣapratikṣepaṇāya ca śāstrāṇām  
sāhityam eva; āgamānām tu tattvaṃ  
vicārayatām avirodha eva. tathā hi—  
Jyotiś śāntam anantam advayam ajam tattad guṇonmīlanād  
brahmā ity acyuta ity umāpatir iti prastūyate na ekadhā  
tais tair eva śadāgamaiḥ śrūtisakhair nānāpathaprasthitair  
gamyo' sau jagadīśvaro jalanidhir vārāṃ pravāhair iva (V-9)

It is also important to note that dharma or merit is as much an impediment to self-realisation as adharma or demerit or sin. Hell is the result of sin and Heaven of dharma. Both of them are the result of Karma and as such Heaven is as much to be despised as hell by one who aims at salvation, since it is also ephemeral like any other thing.

Cf.—

Sa narakād iva pāpaphalād bhayam bhajati punyaphalād api nāśinaḥ  
iti samujjhitakāmasamanvayaṃ sukṛtakarma kathaṃ cana manyate  
(VI-4)

Here it is worth while to note the point of difference between the Vedānta and other orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, such as Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya and Sāṃkhya. In the first place, there is a wide gulf of difference between Vedānta and the sacrificial lore (yajñavidyā). The upanishadic doctrine, the vedānta system, extols the Supreme Being, whose knowledge alone is the means of salvation. The sacrificial lore rejects an Īśvara on the ground that a Being who is not a doer cannot be an Īśvara. It says that the performance of sacrifices such as Jyotiṣṭoma and others is the only means of breaking the bonds of worldly existence, not the knowledge of the Supreme Being. How can a Being, who is not a doer, be called an Īśvara?

Cf.—

pumān akartā Katham īśvaro bhavet  
Kriyā bhavocchedakarī na vastudhīḥ  
Kurvan Kriyā eva naro bhavacchidaḥ  
Sataṃ sāmāḥ śāntamanā jijīviṣet (VI-15)

It is easy to answer this. Though Īśvara is not a doer, Māyā or Illusion, actuated by a mere wink of His, moves to create the world, just as a piece of iron moves under the influence of a magnet. This is the reason why we call the Supreme Being an Īśvara, though He is a non-doer. Cf.—

Ayas svabhāvād acaḥaṃ balāc calaty  
acetanaṃ cumbakasannidhau iva  
tanoti viśveṣṭitur iṣṭiteritā  
jaganti māyā īśvarateyam īṣituḥ (VI-16)

Karma does not remove ignorance, which is the source of worldly existence, but only a Knowledge of the Supreme Being. There is no antithesis between Karma and ignorance but only between knowledge and ignorance.

Secondly, there are two schools of pūrvamīmāṃsā, the prābhākara school and the Bhāṭṭa school. Here it is important to remember that the Prābhākara school agrees with the Advaita vedānta in recognising only one puruṣa and differs from it in saying that this puruṣa is a doer and reaps the fruits of His Karma. Kumārila, the champion of the Bhāṭṭa school, agrees with the Advaitin in saying that puruṣa is a non-doer and a non-enjoyer; but differs from him in that he recognises two different entities, the Supreme Soul and the Individual Soul. He does not recognise the identity of the two. He says that one is omniscient and the other blinded by infatuation; that one reaps the fruits of his deeds whereas the other gives them to him and that one is employed in doing Karma whereas the other bids him do it.

Cf.—

Ekaḥ paśyati ceṣṭitāni jagatām anyas tu mohāndha dhīr  
ekaḥ Karmaphalāni vāñchati dadātyanyas tu tāny arthine



ekah karmasu śīṣyate tanubhṛām śāstā eva devo' paro  
 nissāṅgaḥ puruṣaḥ Kriyāsu sa Kathaṁ kartā iti sambhāvyate (VI-19)  
 Dvau tau suparṇau sayujau sakhāyau  
 samānavṛkṣaṁ pariśasvajāte  
 ekas tayoh pippalam atti pakvam  
 anyas tv anaśnan abhicākaśīti (VI-20)

Lastly we shall note the difference of Nyāya and Sāṃkhya from the Advaita. The Sāṃkhya system distinguishes prakṛti from Puruṣa and recognises twenty-five entities beginning with Mahat, Ahaṅkāra and others.

The Nyāya system differs from the Advaita in that it says that the atoms (paramāṇu) are the material cause (upādāna-Kāraṇa) of the world, not Īśvara, as admitted by the Advaitin. Īśvara is only an instrumental or efficient cause (nimitta-Kāraṇa) of the universe, just as the potter is for the pot. The Sāṃkhya system, in its turn, disagrees with the Advaita in that it accepts prakṛti, not Īśvara, as the material cause of the universe. It says—'There is a great trouble involved in saying that Īśvara is the material cause of the universe; for, then we will have to accept Him to be liable to change and hence perishable, even as the clay, which is the material cause of the pot, is perishable and susceptible to change in the forms of a pot, a dish and the like. Hence prakṛti is the material cause of the world'.

The Advaita philosophy says that Īśvara alone is the material cause (vivarta-upādāna as distinguished from Māyā, the pariṇāma-upādāna) of the universe, neither atoms nor prakṛti, since whatever is discernible or measurable (meya) is made (Kārya) and therefore false (asatya) and since paramāṇu (atoms) and prakṛti are 'meya'

Cf.—

Ambhaśśītakarāntarikṣanagarasvapnendrajālādivat  
 Kāryaṁ meyaṁ asatyam etad udayadhvaṁsādiyuktaṁ jagat  
 śuktau rūpyam iva sraji iva bhujagas svātmāvabodhe harau  
 ajñāte prabhavaty atha astam ayate tattvāvabodhodayāt (VI-22)

And the supposition that we will be forced to recognise Īśvara as liable to change if we admit Him to be the material cause of the universe is merely foolish; for, how can Īśvara who is self-luminous and who is not susceptible to any change by His very nature, undergo transformation when the world is created? Is there any change in the sky when black clouds gather in it?

Cf.—

Śāntaṁ jyotiḥ Kathaṁ anuditānastanītyaprakāśaṁ  
 viśvotpattaṁ vrajati vikṛtiṁ niṣkalaṁ nirmalaṁ ca  
 śaśvan nilotpaladalarucāṁ ambuvāhāvalīnāṁ  
 prādurbhāve bhavati viyataḥ kīḍṣo va vikāraḥ (VI-23)